

Avoiding Sentence Fragments

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify and correct sentence fragments

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- Student Lesson Summary, p. 5
- Practice Worksheets, Levels A and B, pp. 6–8.
- Reteaching Worksheet, p. 9

Teach

- Sentence Fragments:** Distribute the **Lesson Summary**. Preview the **Academic Vocabulary**, stressing that a **sentence fragment** is an incomplete sentence. How is it incomplete? A fragment can be any part, or fragment, of a sentence. Authors *sometimes* use fragments for effect. The fragment “*Horrors.*” —for example, might express a complete thought, but it is not a complete sentence. People often use fragments in speaking. However, the use of fragments in *most* writing is confusing.
- Teaching Sentence Fragments:** Use the **Lesson Summary** to review the four steps students can take to correct sentence fragments in their writing, as follows:
 - Missing Subject:** Call on volunteers to define the **subject** of a sentence. (*The subject tells whom or what a sentence is about.*) Read aloud the example in “Step 1.” Ask: How is the idea confusing? (*It does not tell **who** or **what** surrounds Earth. It is missing a subject.*) Call on a volunteer to identify the missing the subject. (*The atmosphere*)
 - Missing Predicate:** Ask students to define the predicate of a sentence. (*The predicate states the action, what the subject does or is.*) Read the example in “Step 2” and ask: How is the idea confusing? (*It does not tell what the atmosphere **does** or **is**.*) Point out the predicate: stretches up about 600 miles.
 - Missing Subject and Predicate:** After a student reads the example in “Step 3,” ask volunteers to suggest both a subject and a predicate to flesh out the sentence. Then have them identify the subject and predicate in the example. (*Water; evaporates from the oceans into the atmosphere*)
 - Dependent Clauses:** Point out that, a dependent clause contains a subject and a predicate. However, unlike a sentence, a dependent clause does not express a complete thought. Dependent clauses are some of the most common sentence fragments. Have a volunteer read the two options in “Step 4” for making a dependent clause into a sentence. Ask students for other words or phrases that can begin a dependent clause. (*although, as, because, before, since, so, so that, whereas, in order to, etc.*)

QUICK CHECK. Read aloud each sentence below. Ask a volunteer to explain what is wrong and how to correct it.

- Air currents in the atmosphere in constant motion. (*The fragment lacks a predicate; Samples: Air currents in the atmosphere whirl in constant motion. or Air currents whirl in the atmosphere, in constant motion.*)

AVOIDING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS, CONTINUED

2. Carry moisture across the land. (*The fragment lacks a subject; Air currents carry moisture across the land.*)
3. Since rain is recycled, traveling from the oceans to the atmosphere and back. (*This is a dependent clause that does not express a complete thought; Since rain is recycled, it travels from the oceans to the atmosphere and back.*)

Practice and Apply

Practice activities involving sentence fragments appear on pp. 6–8.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet A

1. *S*
2. *Pine cones can help predict the weather.*
3. *S*
4. *The scales of pine cones open out in dry weather.*
5. *When the air is humid, pine cone scales close up.*
6. *S*
7. *Seaweed shrivels and is dry to the touch in fine weather.*
8. *With approaching rain, however, seaweed swells and becomes damp.*
9. *Wool behaves much the same as seaweed.*
10. *If rain is on the way, wool swells and becomes straight.*

Sample Answers: Practice Worksheet B

1. *Changes in the weather occur regularly.*
2. *These changes can affect sailors, farmers, and travelers.*
3. *S*
4. *People have tried many techniques for forecasting the weather.*
5. *Many people make forecasts based on sensory observations and experience.*
6. *Professional weather forecasters are not always accurate.*
7. *S*
8. *Small changes in the air affect plants and animals.*
9. *S*
10. *People have passed forecasting methods down from generation to generation.*
- 11–15. (11) *The chirping of grasshoppers can be a sign of weather changes.* (12) *Their chirping grows increasingly loud as the temperature rises.* (13) *This chirping is not actually a song.* (14) *Instead, it comes from the sound of the insects' legs rubbing against their front wings.* (15) *Wide-open or closed petals of morning glories signal weather changes.*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should correctly answer all of items 1–5 and at least two of items 6–10.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should answer correctly at least eight out of items 1–10 and at least three out of items 11–15.

For students who need reteaching, review the Student **Lesson Summary**. Focus on the examples, and relate them to the definitions. Brainstorm one or two new examples with students. Then have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *S*
2. *We called a professional storyteller.*
3. *S*
4. *Students from other classes will come to our festival.*
5. *A week before the big event, we will send them flyers.*
6. *While I was at the library, I asked Ms. Leung to help me.*
7. *She helped me find just the right story for my performance.*
8. *Perhaps my grandmother can give me some advice.*
9. *Our class just received a video camera from the drama department.*
10. *S*